

Listen to the Wind

by Paul Steven Stone

1.

Long ago, when I was a child, like you, my grandfather told me about the wind.

He pointed to a willow whose branches were dancing in the breeze and asked me what I heard.

"Just the wind," I answered.

He smiled and ran his hand across the top of my head.

"If you really listen," he said, "you will hear spirits speaking to you.

They live in the wind. Some day you will hear them."

"That would be nice," I said.

I was a very polite child.

2.

When I was a child, like you, I was afraid of my own shadow. I was also afraid of everyone else's shadow. I was afraid of the dog, the mailman, the refrigerator. I secretly knew that every stranger I met was the devil in disguise.

I was actually quite a scaredy cat.

3.

One night, I thought I would try to be brave and sleep with the lights out.

Do you know how scared I was?

Too scared to get out of bed and turn on the light.

Too scared to call out to my parents.

Too scared to open my eyes.

Too scared to get up and close the window.

And so the wind came in...

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4.

**Be like me,
Said the wind blowing in,
Shake free of your fears,
Like leaves let them spin.**

**If you can outrun your demons,
They won't chase you again,
Be like me,
Said the wind blowing in.**

**Be like me, child, said the wind,
And know that nothing in the dark
Can ever stop your breeze from blowing.**

5.

When I was a child, like you, I had a special collection. I didn't collect stamps or baseball cards like other children. I collected worries.

In fact, I had the largest collection of worries in America. I was a very worried child.

6.

What were some of the things I worried about?

I worried about how much toothpaste to put on my toothbrush. I worried about light bulbs going out. I worried about rain. I worried about getting cavities. I worried about going blind, or deaf. I worried

about getting lost at the movies. I even worried about my baby brother getting all my clothes before I was finished wearing them.

7.

One day I was so worried about my homework that I decided to tell my mother I was sick, and stay home from school.

I went outside to find her, and noticed the wind playing with the wash on our line.

I didn't stop to worry about it.

I just listened...

8.

**Be like me,
Said the wind racing 'round,
Don't let doubt fill your sails,
They'll only slow you down.**

**Fly above all your worries,
Leave them stuck on the ground,
Be like me,
Said the wind racing 'round.**

**Be like me, child, said the wind,
And never stop long enough
To let your worries catch up to you.**

9.

When I was a child, like you, things always got in my way. Big things, little things, things that lasted a long time, things that came and went quickly.

My father said I was naturally attracted to obstacles. That meant if I walked across an open field with my eyes closed, I would naturally walk into the only tree standing there.

10.

But trees weren't the only obstacles that got in my way. There were bullies to pass on the way to school. Homework to do before I could watch TV. Chores to do before I could get my allowance. If I wanted to join a basketball team, I'd be too short. Or too young. Or too something. If I wanted to go somewhere, I'd arrive too late, or go to the wrong place, or get there on the wrong day. The world to me was a very difficult place in which to live.

11.

One day I especially remember. I was coming home early from the library. The reason I was coming home early was because the library wasn't open that day.

When I got home, the front door was locked and nobody was home. The reason nobody was home was because I wasn't supposed to be home yet.

I went around back, to the window box where we hid the extra housekey. The reason the housekey wasn't there was because I had gotten locked out the day before, used it, then forgot to put it back.

That was about enough to make me start crying. So I started to cry.

Looking up, through my tears, I could see the wind shifting clouds around in the sky.

"So what have you got to say about this?" I screamed.

12.

**Be like me,
Said the wind on the fly,
Never run into walls,
Keep your breeze flying high.**

**Leave those obstacles below,
Where they can't make you cry,
Be like me,
Said the wind on the fly.**

**Be like me, child, said the wind,
And pass quickly over the obstacles
In your life.**

13.

Many years passed before heard from the wind again. By then, I was no longer a child, like you. I was a man. An old man. I had lived most of my life by then. I was famous. I was admired. I was asked to speak at schools. My picture appeared in newspapers and magazines. All in all, I was pretty hot stuff.

14.

Yes, this was the same person who was once too frightened to get out of bed and turn on a light.

The same person who worried constantly about airplane crashes, and about having to pass on his pajamas to his brother.

The very same person who walked into walls so often that people thought it was a habit.

I had forgotten all that. I was too busy signing autographs and talking on TV shows to remember stuff like that.

15.

But then one day I was standing on a hill. I was standing on the exact spot where they were going to put up a statue of me.

That's how big a big shot I was!

I was standing there, looking down into the valley, thinking about how small everyone else was. How small they looked from up here. How small they all seemed compared to me.

Then, all of a sudden, I wasn't standing on a hill. I wasn't standing anywhere. I was lying on the ground. A strong gust of wind had blown me over.

What else could I do?

I sat up and listened...

16.

**Be like me,
Said the wind standing tall,
If you puff yourself up,
Then be ready to fall.**

**Don't go looking for praise,
When you answer a call,
Be like me,
Said the wind standing tall.**

**Be like me, child, said the wind,
And know that every tree you bend down
Will straighten itself once you're gone.**

17.

Long ago, when I was a child, like you, my grandfather told me about the wind.

He told me there were spirits who lived in the wind, and I would hear them if I listened.

Since then, I have listened to the wind. And I have grown from being a child to a man to an old man in my time.

Now I have spent all my days and I no longer listen to the wind.

18.

Now, I am the wind.

